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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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INTERIOR DEPARTMENT ADOPTS PLAN TO CURTAIL SURPLUS CROPS ON FEDERAL LANDS

Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton said today he has approved procedures for Department leasing of Federal land, designed to curtail production on these lands of price-supported agricultural crops which are in surplus supply. The Department presently leases about 100,000 acres for agricultural purposes.

This action is in accordance with President Eisenhower's policy memorandum issued May 21, 1956, advising the heads of departments and agencies that leasing of Federal lands should be "consistent with the Administration's program to reduce price-depressing surpluses and to bring agricultural production into line with markets."

Specifically exempted from the new procedures are lands in national wildlife refuges where grains are produced principally in conjunction with the Fish and Wildlife Service's migratory waterfowl program. This is in accordance with Section 125 of the Soil Bank Act recently enacted, which notes the importance and special nature of these crops as related to the wildlife program. The Fish and Wildlife Service share crops some refuge lands and farms itself other refuge areas as part of the waterfowl feeding program. This program will not be disrupted.

No leases in effect as of July 20, 1956, will be terminated because of the new policy, but the policy will be effective to presently leased lands when leases expire and renewals are sought.

When lands are acquired at a time when surplus crops are growing on them, these crops may be harvested.

Sufficient latitude in administration is permitted to assure that local conditions will be weighed when any bureau or other agency of the Department considers leases either on an individual lease basis or on an area basis. Consideration is to be given to "the interests of individual farmers and the local community, the supply situation of crops that might be grown on the land, the effect of the price-support programs, the objectives of the programs under which such land was acquired or reserved, and maintenance of savings and income to the Government".

Secretary Seaton noted that in determining the acreage in each unit to be offered for lease, the bureau concerned shall consider leasing for family-sized operations.

Liaison with the Department of Agriculture on a continuing basis is provided, with field personnel of the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture authorized to deal directly on operating matters.

Enforcement of the procedures is made the responsibility of each bureau head concerning matters within his jurisdiction.

Crops considered within the scope of the program are those supported in accordance with the Agricultural Act of 1949 as amended and supplemented. On July 5, 1956, the Secretary of Agriculture announced the current price-supported surplus crops to be corn, cotton (upland and extra long staple), rice, peanuts (except Virginia and Valencia), wheat (except durum, class II), tobacco, barley, grain sorghums, oats, rye, and dry edible beans.

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(Note: This story was released through Emergency Press Headquarters, during Operation Alert 1956.)